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WORLD-POLITICS.

ST. PETERSBURG: WASHINGTON.

ST. PETERSBURG, *November, 1906.*

IMPERIAL Russia has entered upon the "slack-water" period of its existence, the interval between the high tide of its fortunes and the ebb. For the Tsardom in the sense of an absolute monarchy has ceased to exist, whereas practical constitutionalism has not yet taken its place, may not indeed take its place for years to come. On the one hand, the Emperor's power is limited, strictly if not narrowly; and, on the other hand, control by the nation has not yet taken parliamentary shape; therefore, as the domestic affairs of Russia can no longer be administered without the combination of those two factors, the subjects of Nicholas II are being governed under difficulties. Curious problems have arisen in consequence and are now exercising all the ingenuity of M. Stolypin's Cabinet, which may be figuratively said to be endeavoring to drive a troika through the barrier of an imperial ukase.

The deadlock was caused by a one-sided self-denying ordinance issued by the Tsar before the first Duma assembled. Desirous of convincing his subjects, once for all, that the promise of a change from absolutism to constitutionalism was no mere will-o'-the-wisp, as the oppositional parties maintained, but a genuine concession to be realized as soon as possible, the monarch solemnly declared that in future no permanent law should be enacted without the assent of the people's representatives assembled in the Duma. Badly worded, like many another generous undertaking given by Emperors and Kings, this assurance was open to several interpretations, one of which was certainly calculated to defeat the object to attain which it was volunteered. Suppose, for instance, the second and the third Duma are composed of extreme

parties, with whom the Tsar's ministers cannot work smoothly. What then? "Change the electoral law which results in the return of unpractical politicians," answer some people. But the feat is impossible. It should and would have been achieved last July, immediately after the dissolution of the first Duma, if the Government had felt itself authorized to meddle with the electoral law. But it did not. That law is one of the many matters which must remain as they are, unless the people's representatives after public discussion have consented to the proposed amendments. And that they will not do. Why should they destroy the ladder by which they rose and may again rise to power? Obviously, it is a "vicious circle": on the one hand, the Government may be unable to get together a legislative assembly willing to accept the present constitution and to work on the lines it traces; yet, on the other hand, it may not alter the electoral law in order to obtain a more businesslike legislature without the consent of the Deputies. And the Deputies will not agree to any proposal of the Cabinet. Clearly, that is a deadlock which could and should have been foreseen and prevented by those who formulated the Tsar's promise.

Again, Russian farmers are condemned by the operation of the same cause to suffer in patience the many hardships under which they have been fretting and chafing for generations. Now, for the second time in history, the Tsar's Government, awakened to a lively sense of its duty and its interest, is not merely willing but eager to make full amends for past neglect, and to pour the ichor of independence and enlightenment into the veins of the wasting peasantry; but its hands are tied, and tied by its own behest. Hence the world is treated to the unedifying spectacle of a Government and an Opposition, both professing the warmest interest in the material and moral well-being of the agricultural classes, yet each effectively hindering the other from redressing their grievances. What the "Cadets," or "Constitutional Democrats," virtually say is, that either they must be invested with power and allowed to legislate for the rural masses, or else there shall be no legislation for them at all. And as one of the remedies recommended by the Cadets is expropriation of the estates of the landed gentry, the Tsar, guided by his advisers, refused to put the power in their hands. In the last Duma, that party, without possessing a majority of Deputies, had the lead of

the house, being able at times to get together a plurality of votes; and it used this power to hinder all legislation in order to oblige the Tsar to alter the constitution, to consent to become a mere figurehead and to hand over the reins of government to its leaders. The experiment was a failure. But the Cadets have not modified their principles nor altered their tactics since then. On the contrary, they have, so to say, stiffened them very considerably by adopting in principle, at their recent conference at Helsingfors, passive resistance as one of their approved methods—that is to say, the refusal, by all their adherents in the nation, to pay taxes or supply military recruits. According to the laws of Russia, that refusal is tantamount to rebellion. Now, it is on the cards that these Cadets, who have already lost a large proportion of their supporters among the thinking and well-to-do people, may even with a much smaller minority than last time again get the control of the Duma. Ministers hope that this will not come to pass, but it is not by any means impossible. And, in this case, legislation would again be at a standstill and agricultural reforms must wait.

But the peasants will not wait. Once aroused from the torpor of ages, they cannot again be put to sleep. True, land is all they want for the moment—if possible, the free land promised by the Cadets, or, if that be a chimera, cheap land, and without delay. But, in order to still this land hunger which is driving many of them literally mad, they are ready to meddle in politics or to dabble in crime, to speak and vote with the republicans or to burn and kill with the anarchists. Moral laws would seem to have no restraining hold upon their will; indeed, unalloyed morality is perhaps wholly unknown to them. Such rudimentary grains of ethics as hitherto weighed with them were found combined with the ore either of religion or of politics, as part of their duty to God or their loyalty to the Tsar. Therefore, goaded by want and misery for which the present Government is responsible, and in sight of the promised land to which a Cadet Ministry undertakes to lead them, they would stick at nothing to reach the goal. This perhaps is the most serious danger with which the Russian Empire is menaced. Trade, industry, finances, the loyalty of the army and navy, the hegemony of the Russian over the Polish, Jewish, Lithuanian, Caucasian and other races, all depend upon the weal and good-will of the peasant. He is the

Atlas whose shoulders support the weight of the Tsardom; and, if he strikes work, all kinds of progress and development are arrested. The first institution to suffer would be the monarchy. Hence the zeal of the Tsar's Government to do tardy justice and hinder a catastrophe; hence, too, the desire of the extreme republican parties to checkmate the Government and to accelerate the catastrophe. The impossibility of making new laws without the Duma, or of convoking a reasonable Duma without new laws is consequently the barrier which the Monarchists have most redoubted.

But Stolypin bids fair to clear the obstacle. He is at this moment making a valiant attempt to drive his troika through the self-denying ordinance, without upsetting the three-in-hand or damaging the parchment barriers. The beginning has already been made, and by the time this article is in the hands of the readers of the REVIEW a series of remedial measures will have been promulgated by which the Premier hopes to score a victory and restore permanent peace to his country.

He will probably reap a large measure of success. But, whether a success or a failure, the scheme is highly ingenious. For, debarred in the absence of the Duma from making laws, he was driven to the interpretation of existing statutes and obliged to infuse all his reform schemes into these deductions. The Premier's ambitious plan, so far as one can discern it at this early stage, is to gain the allegiance of the peasants by giving them the ways and means of bettering indefinitely their material and moral condition; and, that done, to consolidate the power of the monarch and enable him to exercise to the fullest extent every right, every prerogative not expressly waived in the concessions accorded last October. The final upshot would be a strong constitutional monarchy, with the accent on the word "monarchy," but not parliamentary government.

Hitherto, serfdom in a modified form has continued to drag down the peasant class in Russia. The assertion may sound strange, but it is true. The husbandman and his heirs were bound to the soil by ties which the theory of the law allowed them to sever, but only under conditions that were always irksome and often practically impossible. The commune, or "Mir," which has aptly been described as "the crystallization of the powers of darkness," absorbed and wasted all that was best in the Russian

peasant, except where a transforming religious spirit took hold of and regenerated him. If he possessed land, it was conjointly with the community, which could and often did redistribute the holdings. Therefore, he was unable to sell it, and he could not with profit put any money or labor into it except what was requisite for the coming harvest. His children, if he had many, were still worse off; because, if the holdings were insufficient, they were forced to stay on it. If they wanted to enter the state service, to become teachers, to learn a trade, the obstacles to be surmounted were formidable. In a word, hitherto the peasant was the slave of his community, which fettered him so long as he remained in its service, keeping him from accumulating wealth or obtaining culture, and tightened its iron grip upon him whenever he sought to escape and seek his fortune in other walks of life. The rustic parents who want to send their boy to a city school or train him to become a merchant, a clerk, a salesman, must first induce the Mir to approve the scheme. Very often the Mir refuses until its consent is bought, and so long as there is money to be had, so long may the blackmail be levied. Over and over again have budding talents, incipient success in life, family happiness been thus wrecked by an arbitrary order of the Mir dragging back the promising lad to the village of darkness and misery. It was always in the power of the Mir to put a sudden end to the young man's studies, to arrest his success in trade, to bar forever his progress in a craft. It exercised unchallenged sway over old men and young; it allowed or forbade any member to quit the community; it delivered passports or withheld them at its own will and on its own money terms. It was nearly omnipotent. And now it is being struck powerless.

This emancipation of 100,000,000 peasants from the most intolerable yoke, spiritual and material, that ever galled them, will be the welcome results of the first measure adopted by Stolypin. To crown the work, from January next, joint responsibility for taxes and other imposts will be done away with, so that, if a farmer pays his taxes he need not, as hitherto, tremble to think that a number of his neighbors may spend the proceeds of their harvest in drink, leaving him and his thrifty fellow members liable for their debts. He will be answerable only for his own obligations, and consequently stimulated to self-reliance, self-help, self-culture.

But, to the Russian *mujik*, reform without additional land is almost meaningless. His psychology is such that even a Messiah who should come to disenthral him could not gain a hearing, unless he reinforced his miracles by allotments of land. And, if Beelzebub were to offer larger holdings, his chances of gaining the peasants' support would be very considerable. For this reason, the Cadets made their bid of "cheap" supplementary holdings, which their stump orators and secret missionaries interpreted as "gratuitous" farms, and, as the Tsar's supporters could not cap this offer, they were left far behind. M. Stolypin, however, would not be beaten by this manœuvre. He caused the Peasants' Bank to buy a large number of estates from several landowners, who parted with their possessions for moderate prices. The Emperor, seconding his efforts, disposed of many millions of acres of the so-called "appanage lands" and also of Crown estates, and now the Government has it in its power partially to still the craving of the peasants' hearts. The money needed for this reform is seemingly dispensed with, for the farmer who wishes to buy the land now to be allotted may get the requisite sum from the Peasants' Bank in the form of a mortgage at a low rate of interest, and if the new holding be situated far from the old one he can quit the commune, sell the land which he hitherto possessed in undesirable partnership with others, and then migrate to his new home.

Now, this newly granted freedom is the result, not of a new law, but of a new interpretation of an old one. For this reason it is uncommonly interesting. Necessity is the mother of invention, and the juridical fiction invented was this: The Government jurisconsults hold that, when the serfs were emancipated by Alexander II in 1861, the Mir was a voluntary association. And this contention is tenable. In theory, at all events, no one was forced to continue to be a member of it against his will. Hence, a peasant who disliked agricultural pursuits on these lines could ask the community to give him a strip of arable soil for himself, which he might till or sell as he listed. What the community might say or do is another story. That was the state of things in 1861. Thirty-two years later, the departure of a peasant from the community was made much more difficult, indeed almost impossible, until the entire redemption tax on the land should be paid up. It is to this last clause that the Government has

tached all the weight of the new measure. At the end of this year, thanks to a ukase of the Tsar, the land-redemption tax will no longer be levied; and then the intention of the lawgivers of 1861, that the Mir be a purely voluntary association, will again be the principle of peasant legislation, and all other statutes involved must, therefore, be construed in the light of that. Such is the general formula; the applications of it are very ingenious. Buying and selling land will be simplified; title deeds will be accepted which heretofore would have been scoffed at, public notaries are authorized to cut short legal formalities and are obliged to cut down prices in proportion.

Peasant proprietorship in Russia will be the outcome of that new and clever interpretation of an old law, and may involve the gain to the ranks of the Government's supporters of, say, sixty million tillers of the soil, and the return to normal life under much more favorable auspices than heretofore of eighty or ninety millions. Further, it may strengthen the loyalty of the army and navy, conduce to the improvement of trade, industry, finances, and generally contribute to save the country from the ruin that threatened it a few months ago. But all these desirable contingencies can, of course, be realized only if a number of other conditions are also favorable, or, at any rate, are not actively hostile. One of the minor, yet very important, consequences of peasant ownership will be the possibility of improving the farm. Under the old "interpretation" of the law, a man who had a strip of marshy land as part of his holding could not drain it; another who needed some kind of artificial irrigation could not procure it; a third who required guano or a mowing-machine or some other means of heightening the fertility of his soil could not obtain them. For if he himself had the means he would not invest them, because at the next redistribution his improved holding might be assigned to one of his neighbors. And if he wanted to raise the money, people would refuse to lend it for the same reason. Under the new dispensation this difficulty will vanish. It will be the owner's interest to put his savings into his farm; and, if he have none, it will be to his advantage to borrow capital. And, from the outset, the Peasants' Bank will be empowered to make advances to farmers for the purpose of ameliorating their holdings.

Such, in broad outline, is what may be termed the final eman-

icipation of the Russian peasant. As yet, the Government's most important declarations on the subject have not been published; but before this letter is in print they will have been incorporated in the Statute Book. It would be difficult to overrate their significance. The reform seems calculated to better enormously both the land and the people, and to bring about a new condition of things in which a thriving democracy may live and work side by side with a constitutional monarchy. The idea of the present Government probably is that the monarchy should be constitutionally limited, but only as it was limited when the first Romanoff donned the Monomachus cap, that is, by the will of the whole Russian nation, while it would also be morally narrowed and restricted by the Tsar's consideration for the welfare of the nation. That, and not parliamentary government, is the régime which the October Manifesto substituted for the old bureaucratic autocracy, and the present Cabinet is resolved to continue as it has begun, to embody in political institutions all the liberties there bestowed upon the nation, and to do everything possible to get them assimilated. But nothing more is to be given in the way of a free grant. Further liberties must be the outcome of steady development, of fruitful labor, of political maturity. Such is the plan of M. Stolypin's Cabinet.

The worst enemies of that ingenious project are not the Cadets, whose influence is on the wane. Indeed, from the first the members of that political faction were principally their own enemies. The most formidable marplots at present are the Social Democrats and Social Revolutionists, but only in the missionary moods. When they have recourse to the bullet and the bomb and the torch, they may destroy but they cannot transform. Thus, the daring raid on the money-bags of the Treasury on October 27th was largely successful as a means of replenishing the nearly empty coffers of the organization, but it engendered a feeling of intense bitterness on the part of the lower orders of St. Petersburg, whose sympathies had theretofore gravitated towards the revolutionists. Normal people who retain the faculties of thinking and working are sick of bloodshed and violence, and a wave of conservatism, the crest of which appears to be reactionary, is now passing over Muscovy. It is only as silent, secret organizers that the revolutionists are dangerous. When they propagate their subversive doctrines among peasants, bluejackets, soldiers; when

they write, print and disseminate leaflets, pamphlets, books; when they found sodalities, distribute money judiciously, thwart the efforts of the non-political elements of the population and, like Chinese torturers who hinder their prisoners from sleeping, keep the whole community in a state of continuous unrest and alarm, then indeed they are redoubtable.

In several parts of Russia the Social Democrats are exhorting the peasants not to heed the Vyborg Manifesto of the Duma, calling on them to refuse military recruits to the Tsar. "On the contrary," say the Socialists, "go with pleasure; don the soldier's uniform, and then get all your comrades to promise never to fire on the people, who are their brothers. That is your mission." They are flooding the Empire with tales, essays, proclamations, which are eagerly read by millions. It is hard to realize the vogue of this revolutionary literature and the guilelessness of the police and gendarmes who are deputed to stop it. Here in the capital, for instance, every house watchman, almost every policeman and soldier and servant, eagerly devour the badly printed booklets and pamphlets that are constantly passing from hand to hand.

Not only the army and the navy, but the University and grammar-school are now honeycombed with anarchism. It is often termed Socialism, but in last analysis it is Anarchism, pure and simple. And the new generation is saturated with it. This is probably the most alarming symptom of the national malady from which Russia is now suffering. For over two years the high schools, technical institutes, universities and colleges have been closed. The output of scholars, of graduates, of candidates for the learned professions has altogether ceased. The coming generation, in lieu of mental and moral training, is apprenticed to a guild which, in Russia at all events, repudiates culture and advocates violence. The consequences, when they manifest themselves, may be disastrous. Sooner or later the present generation of Russia must pass away and its place will be taken by the men who are now robbing, forging and bomb-throwing, instead of cultivating self-restraint and acquiring knowledge.

This year the conflict has again begun. It is but fair to say that the great majority of the students appear to be strongly in favor of attending lectures and leaving politics at the threshold of the University. They have said this in speeches and written it in letters to the newspapers. But the minority will not allow

the lectures to take place without concessions, and these concessions involve the negation of all government and are incompatible with scientific work. Thus they claim the right to convoke meetings whenever they like, and the professors have complied with the demand on condition that the public from outside is not brought in. But this condition the students reject. Further, the professors ask that the meetings shall not be held during lecture hours; but the students convoke them just then, take possession of the most spacious lecture-rooms and will not be dislodged. Again, the professors ask that revolutionary politics be excluded from the topics discussed. The students, however, pay no heed to the request, invite outsiders, fulminate against the Tsar and his Government, and proclaim a strike of several days to honor the memory of bombists who have been hung.

A practical American would put a speedy end to this childish trifling. One way would be to abolish once for all the student class, and to allow citizens with certain intellectual qualifications to attend lectures at certain hours under determined conditions. They might come, sit, listen and take notes, after which they would quit the building as individual citizens, not as members of a corporation, still less as units of a state within the state.

Possibly, for these problems, as for the agricultural difficulty, M. Stolypin may find a speedy and satisfactory solution.

WASHINGTON, *December, 1906.*

THE principal topic of discussion in the Federal capital during the last ten days has been, of course, the Annual Message sent to Congress on December 4th, by President Roosevelt, and particularly the position taken by him in favor of centralization, a position which was emphasized by Secretary Root in a speech made by him in New York, at a dinner of the Pennsylvania Society, and which, we hear, is presently to be reaffirmed by Mr. Roosevelt himself in a Special Message. The Messages of the Presidents afford no precedent for such an outspoken advocacy by the National Executive of an extreme Federalistic, or Hamiltonian, interpretation of the Constitution. Some shrewd observers, indeed, see in this feature of the Message conclusive proof that Mr. Roosevelt has no intention of permitting himself to be forced into acceptance of a nomination for the Presidency in 1908. Had he contemplated such a thing as possible, they suggest, he would not

have gone out of his way to excite the jealousy and misgiving of champions of State rights, who may be expected to control many delegations to the next Republican National Convention. However that may be, it is certain that his views concerning the extent to which the Federal Government should absorb functions hitherto exercised by the constituent States is disclosed with perfect frankness. For example, when he asks for a Federal income tax he practically demands an amendment of the Constitution, seeing that the U. S. Supreme Court in Mr. Cleveland's second Administration declared a tax of that kind unconstitutional. He goes on to recommend another amendment of the Constitution, which shall provide for a national divorce act. Then, again, he asks Congress to enact legislation which will enable the Federal Government to enforce the rights of aliens under treaties, irrespectively of State authority. If such legislation had been placed long ago upon the statute book, the lynching of subjects of the King of Italy in Louisiana would have been punished, and the relegation of Japanese to a particular public school in San Francisco would have been enjoined by a Federal Court, in the event that such relegation should be adjudged a violation of the treaty between the United States and Japan. Another step towards centralization is Mr. Roosevelt's request that Congress should authorize the creation of a permanent Federal Board of Arbitration, the function of which should be to investigate disputes between employers and employees. He does not ask, as yet, that the decisions of such a board should be compulsory, as they are in New Zealand, because he believes that they would exercise a decisive moral influence on the community, by disclosing the merits of the controversy.

The President's championship of centralization is not limited to the proposals above named, far-reaching as these are. He declares elsewhere in his Message that it must not be supposed that, with the passage of the Railway-rate bill, the Pure-food bill and the Packing-house Inspection bill, it will be possible to stop progress along the line of increasing the power of the National Government over the use of capital in interstate commerce. There will ultimately be need, he says, of enlarging the powers of the Interstate Commerce Commission in several directions, so as to give that board a larger and more efficient control over the railroads. He is convinced, he tells Congress, that the best

way to avert what he deems the very undesirable move (made by Mr. W. J. Bryan) for the governmental ownership of railways, is to assure to the Government, on behalf of the people as a whole, such adequate control and regulation of the great interstate common carriers as will do away with the evils which have given rise to the agitation against them. He holds, in a word, that the Federal Government should not conduct the business of the nation, but that it should exercise such supervision as will insure the conducting of business in the interest of the nation.

The President does not name Mr. Hearst in his Message, but evidently aims at him in a remarkable passage, wherein he denounces demagogues. Discussing the relations of capital and labor, he points out that there are agitators who seek to incite a violent class hatred against all men of wealth. Such men seek, he says, to turn wise and proper movements for the better control of corporations, and for doing away with the abuses connected with wealth, into a campaign of hysterical excitement and falsehood, in which the aim is to inflame to madness the brutal passions of mankind. Mr. Roosevelt declares that the sinister demagogues and foolish visionaries who are always eager to undertake a campaign of destruction are in reality the worst enemies of the cause they profess to advocate, just as the purveyors of sensational slander in newspapers or magazines are the worst enemies of all men who are engaged in an honest effort to better what is bad in our social and governmental conditions. In the President's judgment, to preach hatred of the rich man as such, to carry on a campaign of slander and invective against him, to seek to mislead and inflame to madness honest men whose lives are hard, and who have not the kind of mental training that will permit them to appreciate the danger in the doctrines preached—all this is to commit a crime against the body politic, and to be false to every worthy principle and tradition of American national life. Mr. Roosevelt is convinced that our country's only hope of welfare and progress lies in a resolute and fearless, but sane and cool-headed, advance along the path marked out in the first session of the Fifty-ninth Congress. There must be, he insists, a stern refusal to be misled into following either the base creature who appeals and panders to the lowest instincts and passions, in order to arouse one set of Americans against their fellows, or that other creature, equally base but no baser, who, in

a spirit of greed, or to accumulate or add to an already huge fortune, seeks to exploit his fellow Americans, with callous disregard of their physical and spiritual well-being. From the viewpoint of the President, the man who debauches others in order to obtain for himself a high office stands on an evil equality of corruption with the man who debauches others for financial profit. Nothing, again, could be plainer than the allusion to Hearstism in the averment that the plain people who think, the men to whom American traditions are dear, who love their country and try to act decently by their neighbors, owe it to themselves to remember that the most damaging blow which can be dealt to popular government is to elect an unworthy and sinister agitator on a platform of violence and debauchery.

The President's reference to Cuba in his Message has put an end to the impression which, for a time, seems to have been current in Havana, that the provisional Government established by us in that island might be maintained for an indefinite period. On the contrary, Mr. Roosevelt explicitly limits to "a few months" the term during which the provisional Government will administer Cuban affairs. That government will come to an end as soon as a new general election shall have been held, and a new native Administration shall have been inaugurated in peaceful and orderly fashion. At the same time, Mr. Roosevelt warns the Cubans that they must not expect a periodical interposition by the United States for the purpose of restoring order. He adjures them solemnly to weigh their responsibilities, and see to it that, when their new Government is started, it shall run smoothly, free from flagrant denial of right on the one hand, and from insurrectionary disturbances on the other. They may do well to heed his admonition, for he tells them frankly that, if their elections become a farce, and the insurrectionary habit becomes confirmed in their island, it is absolutely out of the question that Cuba should retain independence.

In proposing that the Federal Government shall levy a graduated inheritance tax, the President does not lay himself open to the charge, which he incurs when advocating a Federal income tax, of protesting against the limitations of the Constitution, for the constitutionality of a Federal inheritance tax has been declared by the U. S. Supreme Court. Mr. Roosevelt holds that an inheritance tax should be levied by the Federal Government,

instead of by the States, because an attempt to impose such a tax in one particular State often results merely in driving the corporation or individual affected to some other State. There is, of course, nothing new about a Federal inheritance tax. Such an impost was first levied as long ago as 1797, when the framers of the Constitution were alive and conducting public affairs. That was a graduated tax, the rate being increased with the amount left to any individual. A similar tax was imposed in 1862, a minimum sum of one thousand dollars in personal property being exempted from taxation, while thereafter the tax became progressive, according to the remoteness of kin. Finally, during our war with Spain, the revenue act of June, 1898, provided for an inheritance tax on any sum exceeding the value of ten thousand dollars, the rate increasing in accordance with the amount left and with the legatee's remoteness of kin.

Conformably to the President's request, the treaty signed at Algeciras was ratified by the Senate in the week ending December 15th, but it was coupled with a resolution, which, in the minds of the other signatories, may cast considerable doubt on the completeness of the ratification. The treaty would not have been ratified without prolonged and strenuous resistance, had not the Senate previously adopted a resolution declaring that, in sanctioning the treaty, it had no purpose of departing from the traditional American foreign policy which forbids participation by the United States in the settlement of political questions entirely European in their scope. In other words, it is the commercial, and not the political, features of the treaty to which our Federal Senate makes the United States a party.